

## Message Text

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21

ACTION ARA-20

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INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /142 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3453

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMCONSUL CALI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 5563

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SUBJ: PRES-ELECT LOPEZ TO REMAIN ABROAD UNTIL EARLY AUGUST

REF BOGOTA 5459 BOGOTA 5346

1. ACTING LIBERAL PARTY CHIEF INDALECIO LIEVANO ANNOUNCED ON JUNE

24 THAT PRES-ELECT ALFONSO LOPEZ MICHELSEN WOULD REMAIN ABROAD  
UNTIL A FEW DAYS BEFORE HIS AUG 7 INAUGURATION.

2. IN A LETTER TO A GROUP OF LIBERAL PARTY OFFICIALS WHO HAD  
SOUGHT THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PRES-ELECT IN THE JULY 25-29  
VISIT OF MEXICAN PRES ECHEVERRIA, LIEVANO STATED THAT LOPEZ DID  
NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY PUBLIC ACTS THAT MIGHT BE INTER-  
PRETED AS INTERFERENCE IN THE GOVT OF PRES PASTRANA.

3. LIEVANO, WHO HAD SPOKEN WITH THE PRES-ELECT BY TELEPHONE,  
REPORTED THAT LOPEZ HAD AGAIN STATED HIS INTENTION OF AVOIDING  
INVOLVEMENT IN THE SELECTION OF THE NEW LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP  
(THE PARTY CONVENTION OPENS ON JULY 26) OR IN THE ORGANIZATION  
OF THE NEW CONGRESS WHICH CONVENES ON JULY 20 AND WILL BE DOMINATED  
BY LIBERAL MAJORITIES IN BOTH HOUSES. IN REGARD TO THE ECHEVERRIA  
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VISIT, LOPEZ SAID THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO INTERFERE IN THE CONDUCT

OF COLOMBIA'S FORN RELATIONS, WHICH UNTIL AUG 7, ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PRES PASTRANA. THE PRES-ELECT, LIEVANO REPORTED, SAID THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO CONSTITUTE A SECOND GOVT PARALLEL TO THAT OF PRES PASTRANA DURING THE FINAL DAYS OF THE PASTRANA ADMIN.

4. LOPEZ LATEST STATEMENTS UNDERSCORE HIS INTENTION OF TAKING OFFICE WITH HIS HANDS FREE. HIS ABSENCE FROM THE COUNTRY PROVIDES HIM WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO AVOID INVOLVEMENT IN THE INTRA-PARTY RIVALRIES THAT WILL ACCOMPANY THE PARTY CONVENTION AS WELL AS THE ORGE OF THE NEW CONGRESS. PRES PASTRANA'S VIGOROUS ASSERTION OF HIS RIGHT TO GOVERN UNTIL AUG 7, IN COMBINATION WITH LOPEZ ABSENCE, SHOULD LEAVE LOPEZ SIMILARLY UNENCUMBERED BY THE APPEARANCE OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PRESENT ADMIN. (THE SCANT USE TO WHICH THE TRANSITION COMMITTEE HAS BEEN PUT IS ANOTHER INDICATION OF LOPEZ'S AIM OF STAYING UNENCUMBERED.)

5. IF LOPEZ IS, IN FACT, ABLE TO AVOID INVOLVEMENT IN INTRA PARTY STRUGGLES (WHICH MAY BE DIFFICULT EVEN AT A DISTANCE) AND CAN CONTINUE TO AVOID ANY MAJOR COMMITMENTS TO THE PASTRANA ADMIN, HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO REACH AUG 7 WITH HIS "CLEAR MANDATE" INTACT AND BE IN A POSITION TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF HIS PRESENT POPULARITY DURING THE CRITICAL FIRST MONTHS OF HIS ADMIN.

6. SINCE JUNE 19 THE PRES-ELECT HAS BEEN IN BUCHAREST ON WHAT PRESS REPORTS DESCRIBE AS AN OFFICIAL VISIT. LOPEZ' ACTIVITIES IN ROMANIA APPEAR TO BE LARGELY CEREMONIAL AND NONE OF THE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM CAN BE DESCRIBED AS DEPARTURES FROM EXISTING COLOMBIAN POLICIES.

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